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ABSTRACT

The reference interview is a critical function of reference work; what a librarian says and does can either build a relationship of trust and satisfaction with patrons, or serve to distance them from librarians. This pilot study examined the attitudes of academic and public librarians toward the reference interview. Librarians from Kent State University Libraries (Ohio) and the Medina County District Libraries (Ohio) were surveyed to determine the type of training that librarians had received regarding the reference interview, and their attitudes about behaviors determined useful in conducting the reference interview. The results of the survey showed that the librarians felt they had received formal training in conducting the reference interview, and that most of the training was given by their employer. Almost all librarians surveyed felt that the skills needed in order to successfully conduct a reference interview are something that can be taught. When asked to rank a list of behaviors determined to be useful when conducting the reference interview, smiling was most frequently cited as the most important behavior. Asking open questions was considered to be the most important behavior in terms of level of importance. A discussion of the techniques necessary to successfully conduct a reference interview is also included. Fourteen tables show distribution of responses and ranking of important behaviors. The reference interview cover letter and survey are appended. (Contains 19 references.) (Author/AEF)

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A STUDY OF LIBRARIANS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE REFERENCE INTERVIEW

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Michele M. Deputy

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Abstract

This paper is a pilot study on the attitudes of academic and public librarians toward the reference interview. Librarians from the Kent State University Libraries and the Medina County District Libraries were surveyed to determine the type of training that librarians had received regarding the reference interview, and their attitudes about behaviors determined useful in conducting the reference interview. The results of the survey showed that the librarians interviewed felt that they had received formal training in conducting the reference interview, and that most of the training was given by their employer. Almost all librarians surveyed felt that the skills needed in order to successfully conduct a reference interview are something that can be taught. When asked to rank a list of behaviors determined to be useful when conducting the reference interview, Smiling was considered the most important behavior most frequently. When the scores were weighted by level of importance, Asking open questions was the most important behavior. A discussion of the techniques necessary to successfully conduct a reference interview is also included.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The reference interview is a critical function of reference work. It predicts the success of each reference transaction, and has the power to affect future transactions. What a librarian says and does can either build a relationship of trust and satisfaction with patrons, or serve to distance them from, librarians.

Bopp and Smith define the reference interview as:

> "..a conversation between library reference staff and a patron for the purpose of clarifying patron needs and aiding the patron in meeting those needs...it is distinguished from general conversation between staff and patron because it has a specific purpose and structure" (Bopp and Smith 1991, 42).

The reference interview is an exchange of information between two people who usually know little about each other, and are not sure what each other expects or needs. The difficulties in this type of exchange are easily evident, and are often exacerbated by a lack of understanding by the patron of what the function of the librarian is. When the patron does not realize what the job of the librarian is they are reluctant to ask for help. The focus of service in the public and the academic library has been different with public librarians feeling it is their job to help the patron find the information the patron needs in a highly hands on manner. In the academic library it has been the tradition that librarians duties are more instructional in nature and that the duty is to show students how to become independent learners. However in recent years, by

investigating the current literature it appears that academic librarians are beginning to realize the importance of customer centered service. Although the general types of service and instruction provided are different the way of treating the reference interview is becoming more similar.

When discussing the reference interview, it is necessary to consider the work of Robert S. Taylor. His research in the areas of question formation and question negotiation are considered ground breaking work in information theory. Taylor defines a question as "an indication of inadequacy on the part of the inquirer who hopes to remedy that inadequacy by calling on the information system." (Taylor 1962, 391).

Taylor defines four levels of question formation. These could be considered the preliminary steps that occur before the reference interview occurs. The first level is the actual but unexpressed need or visceral level. This level is the beginning of what will be a realization of an information need. The second level is the conscious mental description of the need. This is where the need is being realized and the person is beginning to put the need into broad terms or concepts. The third level is what Taylor calls the formalized need. At this level, the information need is put into a formal statement. The fourth level is the compromised need. When patrons approach the reference desk, they are presenting the compromised need. This is the formalized need that has been reworded in anticipation of what the patron feels the information system (librarian) requires (Taylor 1962 Taylor 1968).

The purpose of the reference interview is then to get the patron to go back to the third or possibly the second stage of question formation, so that the librarian can discover the real information need of the patron. This process is what Taylor discussed in his article "Question-Negotiation and Information Seeking in Libraries". In this article, Taylor takes his hypothesis of the four levels of question formation, and adds to it his theory of the five filters. The five filters, are the steps that a question must pass through in the question-negotiation process. Taylor's five filters are

1) determination of subject

2) objective and motivation of inquirer

3) personal characteristics of inquirer

4) relationship of inquiry description to file organization

5) anticipated or acceptable answers

These five filters are the path that librarians take when stripping down the compromised need presented at the reference desk. Firstly, it is imperative in determining the course to take, to define more carefully the subject. Often the subject presented is broader or narrower than what is really wanted. This definition of subject can be done by finding out why the information is being sought, what type of research is being done, and what the patron already knows. These type of investigative questions are important, because all of these factors influenced the development of the question that has been presented (Taylor 1968).

Purpose of the Study

This study is an investigation of librarians' attitudes about the reference interview. This includes information on the training they have received and their attitudes toward behaviors shown to increase the effectiveness of the reference interview. Particular attention has been paid to the effect of certain verbal and nonverbal behaviors on the communication process and to the impact of the library type or setting on the reference interview.

Definitions of Terms

When the term librarian is used it is referring to any library employee who as part of their regular duties provides reference service to the public. This includes those with and without the Master of Library Science. In some instances the term reference staff may be used interchangeably with the term librarian.

Reference Service is any interaction between a librarian and a patron, where the librarian is answering a non-directional question. This study is primarily concerned with face to face reference service, though skills learned or used in phone service are valid for parts of the study.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the reference staff of the Kent State University Libraries and the Medina County District Libraries. Because of the narrow scope of the study, the findings will not be able to be generalized to all public

and academic libraries or librarians.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In addition to the work of Robert S. Taylor related to the reference interview previously mentioned, other researchers have expanded on his work or made other contributions to the literature of the field. For example Geraldine B. King rewords Taylor's Five Filters into a series of questions that a reference librarian should ask him/herself. She divides this questioning process into two parts. First is the determination of subject, objective, motivations and characteristics of the user. Second is the determination of acceptable and anticipated answers (King 1972).

Kings Questions are as follows:

Part One:

1) What does the user want to know?

2) Why does he want to know it?

3) What is he going to do with the information?

4) How much does he already know about the subject?

Part Two:

1) What form does he want the information in?

2) How much information does he want?

Taylor and King's questions are important in determining the real needs of the patron and establishing a dynamic form of communication that will ease the patron's anxieties and fulfill his or her need without intimidation or feelings

of inferiority. In fact, it is feelings such as these that prevent many reference interviews from ever occurring.

King also suggests the use of the open question during the reference interview. The open question is any question which can not be answered by yes or no, and does not limit the patron to a particular set of answers. Open questions ask when, where, why, how or what. An example of and open question would be: "What kind of information do you need?" Examples of a closed question would be, "Do you need statistical information?" or, "Are you looking for a book or periodical?" (King 1972)

Because patrons are often unsure of what they need and where such information can be obtained, the patron is looking for guidance from the librarian. If the librarian provides this guidance in the form of a closed question the patron may go along with the alternatives given by the librarian without getting to the real information need and the best solution.

The use of this verbal communication style can really help in getting to the real information need of the patron by encouraging him or her to put the information need into his/her own words. This technique gets the patron to talk about what he/she needs and helps the patron to more clearly define his/her need (King 1972).

Of course, librarians must keep in mind that many questions do not need to be negotiated. The use of open questions with someone who really just wants a telephone number would be quite frustrating. The librarian in this

situation could make it clear that he/she is available if any additional help is needed, therefore making the patron feel welcome to ask any follow up questions he/she might have.

Another questioning technique is what is referred to as acknowledgement or active listening. Active listening involves not only listening attentively, but also paraphrasing the patron's query, so that he/she can agree with or edit and restate what you have said (Smith and Fitt 1982).

When using active listening it is important not to sound like you are in disbelief, but that you are instead making a statement. Patrons are already often uncertain about asking questions and may take offense if this technique is used improperly. At its best, active listening reassures the patron that the librarian is actually paying attention and opens up the communication process (Ross and Dewdney 1986, 292).

Self-disclosure by the librarian is another communication style that is often recommended for use in the reference interview. Self-disclosure is the practice of the librarian adding personal input and information into the interview, so that the patron feels more at ease and then will be more willing to open up to the librarian (Markham 1983, 370).

In Marilyn Markham's study of the effects of self-disclosure and the reference interview, she did not find that self-disclosure affected the patron's perception of the quality of information received, nor did it affect the likelihood of the patron using the library. Self-disclosure did, however, influence the

patron's perceptions of the warmth and friendliness of the interview, the likability of the librarian, and whether the interview was interesting (Markham 1983, 371). These results seem to support the use of self-disclosure for the benefit of patrons who may be feeling uneasy about the process of the reference interview. There seems to be nothing to be lost in the regular use of self-disclosure.

Understanding question formation and the question negotiation techniques is an important step in becoming an effective reference interviewer. Equally important is the understanding of the nonverbal signals that we constantly send and receive, often without knowing that we are doing so.

Ray Birdwhistle, in his study on the nonverbal aspects of the communication process, found that approximately sixty-five percent of communication is nonverbal in nature, with the rest being verbal (DeVore-Chew 1988, 235). The implications for the reference interview are clear. Librarians must become adept at sensing the non-verbal messages of patrons, and at the same time be aware of the nonverbal messages that we send to others.

Some nonverbal communication techniques that librarians can use to their advantage include maintaining eye contact, leaning forward, smiling, and head nodding. One problem in the nature of the work of a librarian is the practice of doing other work at the reference desk. The problem this causes is, that while the librarian is concentrating on the papers or the terminal in front of them, the patron is perceiving cues that indicate the librarian is preoccupied

and unavailable. Whenever possible reference managers should provide adequate time for staff to do paper work in an area off the reference desk. By removing this distraction librarians can make eye contact with patrons as they enter the reference area and there by demonstrate that they are prepared and willing to provide service.

Virginia Boucher defines two spectrums of nonverbal communication as it relates to librarians. The first is what she refers to as Preoccupation Mode. This would be the behavior displayed by someone who is working at the reference desk. The physical characteristics of this are: arms positioned across the chest; looking downward making eye contact impossible; a frown of concentration and a firm mouth; hands busy; body turned or leaning away; body physically distanced from patron by desk (Boucher 1976, 31).

The second mode of nonverbal communication is the Availability Mode. The physical characteristics of this are, arms relaxed and not covering the body; eyes ready to contact patrons; a smile of greeting; mouth relaxed; eyebrows lifted in attention; hands relaxed; body leaning forward, head up; showing a willingness to leave the desk (Boucher 1976, 31). In all libraries it should be a goal of the reference department to exhibit Availability Mode whenever possible. This may cause staffing and budget concerns but should increase the satisfaction of patrons with the library as a whole, because if the librarians appear that they are ready to help the patron will be more likely to ask questions and, in turn, will be more likely to leave the library with his/her

information need satisfied.

Joanna Lopez Munoz, describes some important ways that we communicate nonverbally. These areas of nonverbal communication include physical distance, orientation, posture, head nods, facial expression, and eye contact (Munoz 1977).

The physical distance that we choose to maintain indicates whether we feel comfortable with the person with whom we are communicating. If we are too close to the other person, it can be interpreted as threatening. If we are too distant it can be interpreted that we feel superior to, or do not like, the person we are communicating with (Munoz 1977, 221). Although the distance that is acceptable can vary by culture, the librarian can try to be sensitive to this and adjust his/her position by taking cues from the patron (Lam 1991).

Along with physical distance, the orientation of our bodies sends messages. Munoz indicates that orienting our bodies toward the person we are communicating with creates a more positive attitude. Also, the way we hold our bodies conveys messages of friendship, hostility, superiority, and inferiority. Since our posture is more difficult to control than facial expressions, a lot can be determined by noticing a tense or restless posture (Munoz 1977, 221).

Most attention in the communication process is given to the face; this is the most expressive part of our bodies and is highly reflective of our feelings. A smile and eye contact are probably two of the most important nonverbal behaviors to use in the reference interview. Boucher reports that eye contact

signals that a person is available for verbal communication, and that the frequency of eye contact during the communication process is positively correlated with the level of liking for the other person (Boucher 1976, 29).

Of course this can be overdone to the point of staring at someone and making them feel threatened and uncomfortable. Because nonverbal behavior is hard to control, the best way to learn to implement it in the reference interview is to try to remain natural. Patrons will easily identify any forced behavior on the part of the librarian (Katz 1992, 58). The knowledge that nonverbal communication exists and that certain behaviors help facilitate a positive interchange will help in the self examination that is necessary to improve the messages that one sends.

Closely related to the issues of nonverbal behavior and effective questioning techniques is the issue of approachability and why users are reluctant to ask questions at the reference desk. Mary Jane Swope and Jeffrey Katzer set forth to answer the questions of why people don't ask questions at the reference desk, how many of these people exist, and what we can do to rectify the situation (Swope and Katzer 1972).

Swope and Katzer interviewed users at Syracuse Universities Carnegie Library to determine how many would ask a librarian for assistance. They found that 41 percent of the users had a specific question, but that 65 percent of these would not ask the librarian for help. The reasons for not asking were that the librarian was busy, that the question was too simple for the librarian,

or that they had a bad experience with that librarian in the past (Swope and Katzer 1972).

Many communication problems occur because the role of the librarian is undefined, and this uncertainty in what a librarian does increases the hesitancy of the patron to ask questions. Patrons' conceptions of librarians are influenced by media stereotypes of librarians as stern people who are present to enforce silence, and are too busy to help patrons (Land 1987). Also adding to the confusion is that patrons are accustomed to the school librarian whose emphasis is on teaching students how to uses libraries independently. This role is different form those of other librarians whose duties have less emphasis on instruction and more on providing and interpreting information (Katz 1992, 62).

As a solution to the problem of non-askers, Swope and Katzer suggest emphasis in library education on interviewing techniques, customer and public relations, and an ability to read the verbal and nonverbal behavior of themselves and the effects of their own behaviors on others. They also feel that library administrators must be willing to free the reference staff from the constraints of the desk (Swope and Katzer 1977). Numerous studies, including ones discussed here, have shown that the reference desk is a barrier to effective communication.

The last two articles examined setting performance standards for reference service and for evaluating and improving reference performance. The first article by Carole A. Larson and Laura K. Dickson describes the process that

the University of Nebraska at Omaha went through to develop reference desk performance standards as they relate to particular behaviors (Larson and Dickson 1994).

The staff at the University of Nebraska at Omaha worked together to develop a list of desirable behaviors and goals for providing reference service. It was found that the process improved understanding and communication between the paraprofessional and professional staff. It also aided supervisors when doing evaluations because it gave an objective way to measure what had been previously undefined or unwritten rules. Another benefit of developing these behavior standards was that new employees are given the standards in their training period, thus clearly defining what is expected and giving the trainer and the trainee concrete issues for discussion (Larson and Dickson 1994).

The behaviors were grouped into five goals with a listing of specific behaviors that would fulfill these goals. The behaviors include smiling when patron approaches desk, establishing positive eye contact, asking if patron has found what they need, and not bringing work to the desk which requires intense concentration (Larson and Dickson 1994).

The second article by Gers and Seward gives the results of study done by the Maryland public Libraries. This study set out to find out the degree of accuracy in reference services, the level of resources and kinds of activities that lead to desired levels of performance. After evaluating the responses, three

factors were identified that affected reference performance. These were the resources at the library, the amount of demand on the resources, and the behaviors used by librarians. The behaviors that were identified as important in influencing reference performance included using negotiation skills when asked a question, showing interest in the question, showing comfort with the question, and following up with the patron. These four behaviors were shown to significantly affect the accuracy of the librarian's answer. A model reference behaviors checklist was developed as a result of the study and is very useful in defining what behaviors should be thought about and used when conducting the reference interview (Gers and Seward 1985).

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The research done was a pilot study of two libraries in Northeastern Ohio. The first was the Kent State University Libraries. Kent State University Libraries provide service to 24,098 students and 737 faculty members. Service is provided through the main library, five departmental libraries and seven regional campus libraries. All workers who provide reference service at all reference desks in the main, branch, and regional libraries were surveyed. This survey included student workers, para-professionals, and professionals.

The second library surveyed was the Medina County District Library. This system serves over one hundred thousand residents of Medina County, Ohio. Service is provided through the main library in Medina and through four branch libraries throughout the county. All staff who work any amount of time providing reference service were included.

The data for this study was gathered using the survey method. A two page survey was distributed to the librarians at the Kent State University Libraries and the Medina County District Libraries. These two library systems were selected for this study because of the researcher's working relationship with both institutions and because of their geographic proximity.

In constructing the survey attention was given to performance standards developed by the University of Nebraska at Omaha (Larson and Dickson 1994) and the Model Reference Behaviors Checklist developed by the

Maryland Public Libraries (Gers and Seward 1985). These standards were used to assist in the wording and focus of the survey. This was helpful because concepts that have been discussed previously were presented in easy to understand terminology which is necessary when presenting a survey to people of varying experience with the literature.

The survey is two pages long and contains 13 questions. The information requested is background information on education, length of work in libraries and reference interview training received. Questions 6 through 12 use a four point Likert scale to ascertain the attitudes of the librarians about the reference interview and particular behaviors proven useful when conducting the reference interview. Question 13 asks the librarians to rank eight specific reference behaviors with 1 being the most important and 8 being the least important.

A total of 86 surveys were distributed and 60 were returned, for an overall response rate of 70 %. The surveys were distributed differently for the public and the academic libraries, and this may have effected the number of respondents. Thirty-nine surveys were distributed to the public libraries and 35 were returned (90%); 47 surveys were distributed in the academic libraries and 25 were returned (53.2%). The public library surveys were distributed by the reference librarian at the main library and the surveys were returned to her. The respondents were encouraged to return their surveys to the manager by a specified date.

In the Kent State libraries surveys were distributed to the mail boxes of the librarians in the main reference office while the branch and regional librarians received their surveys from the researcher via campus mail. Also the number of workers at the branch and regional libraries of KSU were estimated at three per library while the actual number may have been less.

When the surveys were returned the data was statistically analyzed calculating percentages and frequencies for all questions and chi square analysis of the relationships between variables and type of library was conducted.

Examples of the cover letter and the survey sent to the librarians are present in Appendix A and B.

Chapter IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

As stated previously a total of 60 surveys were received out of a total of 86 sent. All questions were analyzed on the basis of 60 responses except for question two which had 59 responses and question thirteen which had 58 responses. The first question asked for the number of years that the respondents had been providing reference service. The majority of respondents had worked between 1 to 7 years as reference librarians. This group comprised 56.7% of the total. The remaining respondents were evenly spread out among the remaining categories (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Distribution of Years Providing Reference Service.

Number of Years	f	%
Less than 1 year	5	8.3
1 to 3 years	16	26.7
4 to 7 years	18	30.0
8 to 11 years	9	15.0
12 to 15 years	7	11.7
16 or more years	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

When asked about the amount of library education the respondents had received, 54.2% had a master's of library science degree. The next largest group, 25.4%, had no formal library education and had received their training on the job, while 15.3% were currently enrolled in an MLS program. The

remaining 5.1% have received an undergraduate or associates degree in library science (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Distribution of Library Education Received.

Type of Library Education	f	%
Master's degree in library science	32	54.2
Currently enrolled in MLS program	9	15.3
Undergraduate degree in library sci.	2	3.4
In undergrad lib. sci. program	0	0.0
Associate degree in library science	1	1.7
In assoc. degree program	0	0.0
On the job training	15	25.4
Total	59	100.0

Of the sixty respondents 35 (58.3%) worked at one of the Medina County District libraries and 25 (41.7%) worked for the Kent State University Libraries (see Table 3). When asked about the training they had received concerning how to conduct a reference interview 45 (76.3%) respondents indicated that they had received formal training (see Table 4). Having been trained by their employer was indicated by 38.3%; 28.3% received most of their training in library school, and 23.3% indicated that the skills they had in the reference interviewing process were self taught. The remaining 10% indicated that they had attended a workshop or had employed some other

method such as observation to learn how to conduct an interview (see Table 5).

Table 3.

Distribution of Type of Library.

Library Type	f	%
Academic	25	41.7
Public	35	58.3
Total	60	100.0

Table 4.

Distribution of Formal Training in the Reference Interview.

Training	f	%
Formally trained	45	76.3
Not formally trained	14	23.7
Total	59	100.0

Table 5.

Distribution of Where Most Training in the Reference Interview was Received.

Type of Training	f	%
Employer training	23	38.3
Library school	17	28.3
Workshop	4	6.7
Self taught	14	23.3
Other	2	3.3
Total	60	100.0

When asked for their level of agreement with the statement that the skills for effective reference interviewing are something that can be taught, 15% strongly agreed and 80% agreed. Only 5% disagreed with this statement (see Table 6). When asked if they felt confident in their ability to successfully conduct a reference interview, 21.7% felt strongly confident, 71.7% felt confident and 6.7% did not feel confident in their ability (see Table 7).

Table 6.

Distribution of Whether the Reference Interview can be Taught.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	9	15.0
Agree	48	80.0
Disagree	3	5.0
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 7.

Distribution of Confidence in Ability to Successfully Conduct a Reference Interview.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	13	21.7
Agree	43	71.7
Disagree	4	6.7
Strongly disagree	0	0.0
Total	60	100.0

The remaining questions asked the librarians to indicate their level of agreement with certain behaviors related to the reference interview. When asked if knowing why a patron asks a question is important when answering the question, 31.7% strongly agreed, 53.3% agreed, 13.3% disagreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed (see Table 8). It is encouraging that 85% of the librarians surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that knowing why a patron asks a question is important in answering a question, because as Robert Taylor demonstrated in his study on question negotiation, it is important to know the context in which a question is being asked so as to get to the real information need (Taylor 1962 1968).

Table 8.

Distribution of Agreement that Knowing why a Patron is Asking a Question is Important when Answering the Question.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	19	31.7
Agree	32	53.3
Disagree	8	13.3
Strongly disagree	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

Librarians were asked if they agreed with the statement that patrons usually ask for what they want. None of the librarians strongly agreed with this statement but 31.7% did agree with it, 1.7% disagreed and 6.7% strongly disagreed (see Table 9). The response to this question could relate directly to the type of reference service that librarians are asked to perform. If the librarian's responsibilities are to mainly answer ready reference questions or if he/she has not been instructed in the techniques of question negotiation it is likely that he/she would accept patron questions at face value.

Table 9.

Distribution of Agreement that Patrons Usually ask for what they want.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	19	31.7
Disagree	37	61.7
Strongly disagree	4	6.7
Total	60	100.0

When asked their level of agreement with the statement that using yes or no questions makes the reference interview more efficient, 5 percent strongly agreed and 25 percent agreed; 33 percent disagreed and 9 percent strongly disagreed (see table 10). The results to this question are probably related to type of service provided and or lack of training in questioning techniques or they may have misinterpreted what was the researcher meant by efficient. While asking someone a question that can only be answered yes or no may make that one interview quicker the quality of the answer will probably be low and the patron will not be satisfied.

Table 10.

Distribution of Agreement that Using Yes or No Questions will make the Reference Interview more Efficient.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	3	5.0
Agree	15	25.0
Disagree	33	55.0
Strongly disagree	9	15.0
Total	60	100.0

When asked if the respondents agreed with the statement that librarians should go with patrons to use a resource whenever possible, it was found that 38.3% strongly agreed with this statement, 48.3% agreed, 11.7% disagreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed (see Table 11). The fact that 86.6% of the respondents felt it was important to go with a patron should help patrons feel more comfortable with asking questions and should improve service in that the librarian is assured that the patron finds the resource and also opens up new opportunities for patron librarian communication. The librarian that leaves his or her desk is showing a willingness to help and indicating the importance of the individual patron's question.

Table 11.

Distribution of Agreement that Librarians Should go with Patrons to use a Resource Whenever Possible.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	23	38.3
Agree	29	48.3
Disagree	7	11.7
Strongly disagree	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

The last question using the Likert scale to measure levels of agreement asked if the respondents agreed with the statement that following up with patrons helps to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of the reference interview. It was found that 5% strongly agreed, 48.3% agreed, 11.7% disagreed and 1.7% strongly disagreed (see Table 12).

Table 12.

Distribution of Agreement that Following up with Patrons Helps to Improve the Accuracy and Effectiveness of the Reference Interview.

Level of Agreement	f	%
Strongly agree	3	5.0
Agree	29	48.3
Disagree	7	11.7
Strongly disagree	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

The respondents were asked to rank in order of importance eight different behaviors that have been shown to improve the reference interview. These behaviors were smiling, not doing work at the desk, maintaining eye contact, paraphrasing patrons requests, asking open questions, making attentive comments, leaning toward the patron, and willingness to leave the desk. Respondents' perceptions about the importance of reference librarians' behaviors were analyzed two different ways: using weighted scores and by analysis of those behaviors rated most frequently as "most important." Although the results are slightly different in terms of individual behaviors, the same four behaviors are in the top half of the list for both ranking methods. (see Table 13 and 14)

Responses were weighted by assigning a point value to each of the possible responses. Those behaviors ranked first were worth 8 points and the point level decreasing in descending order to those being ranked eighth receiving 1 point. The number of responses were calculated and multiplied by the points assigned to each ranking level. Asking open questions received the highest score with 344 points. This was followed closely by Maintaining eye contact with 325 points, Paraphrasing patron's request with 324 points and Smiling with 301 points (see Table 13).

When looking at the behaviors ranked most frequently as the most important, Smiling was first with 25.9%, followed by Paraphrasing patron's requests with 22.4%, Asking open questions at 17.2%, and Maintaining eye contact with 15.5% (see Table 14).

Table 13.
Weighted Ranking of the Importance of Librarian Behaviors in Descending Order.

Behavior	Weighted Score
Asking open questions	344
Maintaining eye contact	325
Paraphrasing patron's request	324
Smiling	301
Willingness to leave desk	287
Making attentive comments	254
Not doing work at the desk	135
Leaning toward patron	116

Table 14.

Rank Order of Librarian Behaviors Rated Most Important

Behavior	f	%
Smiling	15	25.9
Paraphrasing patron's requests	13	22.4
Asking open questions	10	17.2
Maintaining eye contact	9	15.5
Willingness to leave the desk	5	8.6
Not doing work at the desk	3	5.2
Making attentive comments	3	5.2
Leaning toward the patron	0	0.0
Total	58	100.0

Chi-square analysis was done to see if there was a significant relationship between each variable and the type of librarian (academic or public). No significant relationships were found. This may have to do with the small number of people that were surveyed.

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Knowing how to successfully conduct a reference interview is an important part of being an effective librarian. Behaviors that are most important include question negotiation, displaying appropriate nonverbal clues, and being able to employ questioning techniques such as paraphrasing patron questions, and asking open ended questions.

Libraries today have to continue their efforts to provide client centered reference service that will reduce the fears of the patron and encourage him or her to return to the library and to think of the library as an action oriented place oriented towards solving patrons information needs. By conducting research, developing staff and being willing to experiment with the way reference service is provided librarians should continue to make strides towards the goal of providing the best service to each patron.

The results of this survey show awareness of the issues of providing effective reference services although there were some areas that indicate continued education may be necessary, such as knowing why the patron asks a question is important and that librarians should go with the patron to use resources whenever possible.

By giving staff members a survey such as this one managers should be able to assess the understanding of behaviors desired for providing excellent service and also give an opportunity for opening communication on the subject between management and staff and between staff members.

The reference interview has long been considered an art required through experience but the studies discussed here and the results of this survey show that there are actual behaviors that can be taught and evaluated.

Appendix A

School of Library and Information Science
(216) 672-2782
Fax 216-672-7965

Kent STATE UNIVERSITY
P. O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

Re: Reference Interview Survey
September 5, 1995

Dear Librarian:

I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am conducting a study about the attitudes of librarians toward the reference interview. The enclosed questionnaire elicits information that will help to analyze the attitudinal differences between librarians in a public library environment and in an academic library environment.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as you do not need to sign your name to individual questionnaires; only the investigator has access to the survey data. There is no penalty of any kind if you should choose to not participate in this study or if you would withdraw from participation at any time. While your cooperation is essential to the success of this study, it is, of course, voluntary. A copy of the results of the study will be available upon request.

If you have any further questions, please contact me at (216)672-2782 or Dr. Lois Buttlar, my research advisor, at (216)672-2782. If you have any further questions regarding research at Kent State University you may contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, at (216)672-2851.

Thank you very much for your cooperation; it is much appreciated. You may return the questionnaire to the main reference office of your library or to me personally at the following address:

Michele Deputy
933 White Oak Circle
Medina, Ohio 44256

Sincerely,

Michele Deputy
Graduate Student

Appendix B

Reference Interview Survey

1. How long have you been providing reference service?

__less than 1 year
__1-3 years
__4-7 years
__8-11 years
__12-15 years
__16 or more years

2. Library Education received (check one answer)

__Masters Degree in library science
__currently enrolled in MLS program
__undergraduate degree in library science
__currently enrolled in undergraduate library program
__associates degree in library science
__currently enrolled in associates degree program
__on the job training

3. What type of library do you work for?

__Academic
__Public

4. Have you been formally trained in how to conduct a reference interview?

__Yes __No

5. Where have you received most of your training in how to conduct a reference interview? (check one response only)

__employer training
__library school
__workshop
__self taught
__other_____

6. The skills for effective reference interviewing are something that can be taught. (circle one)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I feel confident that I know how to successfully conduct a reference interview.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. Knowing why a patron is asking a question is important when answering the question. (circle one answer)

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. Patrons usually ask for what they want.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. Using questions that require a yes or no answer will make the reference interview more efficient.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. Librarians should go with the patron when ever possible.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. Following up with patrons helps to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of the reference interview.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. Rank the importance of the following behaviors with 1 being the most important and 8 being the least important.

__smiling
__not doing work at the desk
__maintaining eye contact
__paraphrasing patrons request
__asking open questions
__making attentive comments
__leaning toward patron
__willing to leave desk

Thank you for your cooperation.
Please return completed survey to your central office or to:
Michele Deputy
933 White Oak Circle
Medina, Ohio 44256

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